



A Handbook for Planning and Managing Agritourism and Nature Tourism Operations



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Contents

What is Agritourism	1
An A to Z of Potential Enterprises for Agricultural and Nature Tourism.....	2
Why People Vacation.....	3
Assessing Your Assets – Start with What You Have	4
People Resources.....	5
Wildlife Inventory	6
Assessing Your Preferences, Options, and Goals	7
Tips for Building Community Partnerships	8
Creating a Business Plan.....	9
Marketing Your Enterprise	18
Marketing Equals the Four Ps	20
Customer Relations.....	22
Conducting Farm and Ranch Tours	23
On-Farm Customer Relations.....	27
Safety and Risk Management.....	30
Insurance Coverage for Legal and Liability Risks.....	33
California Agricultural Homestay Bill (AB 1258)	35
The Americans with Disabilities Act	37
Resources.....	41



What is Agritourism?

An agritourism operation is a commercial enterprise at a working farm or ranch conducted for the enjoyment or education of visitors and generates primary or supplemental income for the operator.

Agritourism is a subset of a larger industry—rural tourism—that includes resorts, farmers markets, agricultural tours, and other leisure and hospitality businesses that attract visitors to the countryside.

Rural tourism differs from agritourism in two ways. First, rural tourism enterprises do not necessarily occur on a farm, ranch, or other agricultural operation. Second, such enterprises do not necessarily generate income for the agricultural enterprise.

Farm and ranch recreation refers to agritourism activities that are conducted on private agricultural lands and can include fee-hunting and fishing, overnight stays, and educational activities.



Potential Agritourism Enterprises



Educational Experiences

- school tours
- garden and nursery tours
- winery tours
- agricultural technical tours
- historical agriculture exhibits
- crop sign identification programs
- exotic animal farm
- processing facility tour

Direct Agricultural Sales

- on-farm sales
- roadside stand
- agriculture-related crafts and gifts
- u-pick operations

Entertainment

- concerts or special events
- festival or fair
- petting zoo
- hunting / working dog trials / training

Outdoor Recreation

- horseback riding
- fee fishing
- camping and picnicking
- fee hunting
- wildlife viewing and photography
- wagon and sleigh rides
- cross-country skiing
- game preserve
- clay bird shooting
- off-road vehicles

Accommodations

- bed and breakfast inn
- farm and ranch vacations
- guest ranch
- youth exchange
- elder hostel

Miscellaneous

- guide / outfitter operation
- farmers market
- horse pack team

An A to Z of Potential Enterprises for Agricultural and Nature Tourism

This expanded list of potential activities can help you think about your current operation and assets that may be used for developing an agritourism enterprise. Potential options are limited only by your imagination and, in some instances, regulations. Other units in this manual will help you assess factors such as liability issues, financing, and marketing as you evaluate the kinds of activities that could work for you.

- animal care
- archery
- arrowhead hunting
- barn / square dancing
- bed and breakfast
- bird watching
- boating
- camping / picnicking
- children's camp
- corporate picnics
- craft show
- crop tours
- crosscountry skiing
- dog training
- dog competitions
- driving tours
- educational tours
- elder hostel



- family reunions
- farm work
- fee fishing
- fee hunting
- floral arrangements
- flower show / festival

- fly fishing / tying
- food festivals
- gardens
- guiding / outfitting
- habitat projects
- harvest festivals
- hay / sleigh rides
- hiking / caving
- history displays
- horseback riding
- horseshoeing
- hunting
- ice fishing
- kayaking / canoeing
- leatherwork
- mountain biking

- off-roading
- pack trips
- painting
- petting zoo
- photography
- ranch skills
- roadside stand
- rock climbing
- rock collecting
- rodeo
- school activities
- snowmobiling
- swimming
- technical tours
- tepee building
- trap / skeet shooting
- tubing / rafting
- you-pick operations
- wagon trains
- wildlife viewing
- wilderness experiences



Why People Vacation

Understanding what agritourism visitors want can help you assess potential opportunities on your property for agritourism enterprises. Here are the key reasons people give for going on vacation.



- **To build and strengthen relationships.** The number one reason people give for going on vacation is to be together as a family. Families find they have little time to be together. They want to get away from the stress of home and work and look to travel as an opportunity to rekindle relationships. Many also seek social interactions on trips and view vacations as a time for making new friends.
- **To improve health and well-being.** The vast majority of adults say that a vacation is vital to their families' physical and mental well-being. Most travelers who visit destinations in California want to refresh and renew themselves by **actively participating in outdoor activities.**
- **To rest and relax.** Getting away from work and responsibilities enables vacationers to refresh and renew. This is the third most common reason why Americans vacation.
- **To have an adventure.** Many travelers look to vacations for exciting experiences that stir past emotions. Adventure, whether dangerous or romantic, provides the heightened sensation that these visitors seek.
- **To escape.** Many people travel to gain respite from routines, worry, and stress. They are seeking something different—a better climate, prettier scenery, slower pace of life, cleaner air, quieter surroundings—anything that is missing or deficient in their lives at home.
- **To gain knowledge.** Learning and discovery are strong motivators for today's better-educated travelers. People travel to learn or practice a language, study a culture, explore gourmet food or wine, investigate spirituality, discover something about themselves, and a host of other pursuits. They want to see, touch, or feel something unfamiliar.
- **To mark a special occasion.** Some travelers take vacations to celebrate milestones in their lives—new relationships, marriages, birthdays, or professional achievements. Vacations that mark special occasions are usually taken with loved ones and provide memories for a lifetime.
- **To save money or time.** Money and/or time constrain virtually every vacation decision. By traveling close to home or taking a shorter vacation, travelers can save time and money. **Hence local and regional residents can be key targets of agritourism ventures.**
- **To reminisce.** Many people travel to revisit fond memories. Some vacationers, especially older travelers, choose a farm visit to rekindle memories of the simple, rural lifestyle they remember from childhood. While these vacationers may pay for food, lodging, transportation, and souvenirs, they are really buying a sentimental journey.

Assessing Your Assets - Start with What You Have



Rather than immediately spending money to create something new, begin by assessing your property for potential attractions that already exist. Use the following checklist to help you identify and list potential agritourism assets, as well as liabilities, you currently have. You can refer to this list as you evaluate different options and ideas.

Climate

Consider how weather patterns and temperature affect the types of activities you can provide.

Temperature – monthly variations, highs and lows, length of growing season.

Rain – distribution during the year and quantities likely during peak visiting seasons.

Snow – groundcover periods and accumulated depth.

Land

List what you have: deeded property, leased private property, state and federal allotments, rangeland, woodland, hay meadows, cropland, riparian lands, wetlands.

Evaluate these resources Also evaluate the qualities of these resources: acreage, location, access, elevation, topography, location of pastures, etc.

Developments and Improvements

Buildings, shelters, fences, corrals, working facilities, equipment, roads and trails.

Other Attractions

List amenities that can enhance the experience for a visitor, such as wildlife, streams, ponds, fishing, livestock, proximity to natural or man-made points of interest.

Activities

List activities you carry out on your operation that might appeal to the public. Remember, what is routine to you can be unusual and interesting to visitors. Be free with your ideas in this section—you'll evaluate them later. Activities can include cattle drives, calving or lambing, shearing, trail rides, roadside produce stands, machinery operations (harvesting, planting, cultivating), or on-site food processing.

Operations and Management

Owner/Manager Strengths and Goals

– List those intangible assets that can assist you in an agritourism operation—“people person;” your marketing ability; your knowledge of local interests such as historical sites; special skills such as horseback riding, livestock management, or cooking.

Family Strengths and Resources – List the skills and strengths that family members can add to your business as assets.

People Resources

Staff – Family and Hired

Are they friendly, confident, accepting of strangers/guests?

_____ Yes No Neutral
 _____ Yes No Neutral
 _____ Yes No Neutral

Do any of them have special talents or abilities (list)?



Are nonfarm professionals committed to working with you on a successful venture?

Accountant: _____ Yes No Unknown
 Attorney: _____ Yes No Unknown
 Lender: _____ Yes No Unknown
 Consultant: _____ Yes No Unknown

Are your neighbors supportive of your venture?

Neighbor 1 Will they allow access? Yes No
 Any Conflicts? Yes No
 Do they support your venture? Yes No Unknown

Neighbor 2 Will they allow access? Yes No
 Any Conflicts? Yes No
 Do they support your venture? Yes No Unknown

Neighbor 3 Will they allow access? Yes No
 Any Conflicts? Yes No
 Do they support your venture? Yes No Unknown

Will community and government agencies understand and support your plans?

Law Enforcement Yes No Unknown
 Game Wardens and Biologists Yes No Unknown
 Local Regulators Yes No Unknown
 State Regulators Yes No Unknown
 Federal Regulators Yes No Unknown
 Economic Development Staff Members Yes No Unknown
 Business and Tourism Association Yes No Unknown

Assessing Your Preferences, Options, and Goals

Now that you have undertaken an assessment of your agritourism assets, you need to assess your goals, preferences, and options. All of your partners (family members and outside interests) should get together and share their personal and business goals for the enterprise. Individual goals that do not mesh can frustrate efforts to create a successful business.

One real market advantage of farm and ranch recreation is that potential visitors are numerous. However, using a “shotgun” approach to try to attract anyone and everyone is expensive and seldom effective without a massive advertising campaign. Your time and money can be more effectively used to target particular groups of visitors who are likely to be interested in what your farm or ranch offers, such as sportspeople, families, retirees, bird-watchers, and photographers.

Define Your Goals

- What kinds of visitors can you attract to your farm or ranch with the operation you have now?
- What kind of visitors would you prefer to attract?
- How might changing the products and amenities you offer affect your ability to market to your preferred clientele?

Create a Profile of the Visitor You Want to Attract

What are the demographics of your ideal visitor?

- Has at least one of the following interests (hunting, horses, photography, gardening, natural food, etc.):
- From which geographic region?
- Age(s):
- Marital status:
- Family size (children, extended family):
- Income level(s):
- Interests (nature, adventure, etc.):
- Personality traits (independent, self-fulfilling, self-help, action-oriented, active):

Write a paragraph or two describing your customer or customers you prefer (feel free to use your own worksheets for this and all other exercises).



Tips for Building Community Partnerships

Establishing relationships and cooperative alliances in your community is a key element in enhancing your prospects for long-term success.

- **Talk about your proposed project** with neighbors, family, and local businesses. Share your ideas. Listen to their concerns and feedback. Address any potential problems early in the project's development.
- **Develop a comfortable style of public presentation.** Have a clear picture of your mission and expected outcomes. Talk about your project at service club and association meetings and other gatherings. Get feedback and modify your presentation. Join the local chamber of commerce. Offer to write a regular column for your local newspaper if you have time and the ability.
- **See any shortcomings as potential for future partnerships.** Inventory your community, seeking out those who have what you need in order to accomplish your goals. Develop mutually supportive relationships.
- **Identify those with whom you share potential customers.** Align yourself with other complementary businesses and attractions. Develop joint promotions and possibly joint marketing opportunities to track the source of your leads. Be innovative.
- Regarding local ordinances, the government listens to **commitments, not complaints**, and so do your neighbors. Work through compliance issues as required by law and in a spirit of cooperation with surrounding property owners.
- **Engage adversaries.** Most people simply want to be heard or are afraid of unknown impacts. Sit down with them, listen, and address their concerns.
- **Make your business and marketing plans available** to others unless confidentiality is advised. Engage them in working with you. Use your plans to support your actions and efforts.
- **Work to foster a sense of community and personal responsibility** among community members.
- **Manage physical expansion** of your operation in a way that ensures a satisfactory quality of life for everyone affected.
- **Work with other businesses** to encourage support for locally owned businesses in general.
- **Build on the agricultural, timber, wildlife, and other resource-based assets in the area.** Maintain and enhance historic structures in your locality.



Creating a Business Plan



Creating a business plan is the process of charting a map for your enterprise—it is an essential part of any successful business and is especially important when creating a new venture. There are many potential benefits from creating a business plan. A good plan can help you better manage by clarifying your goals, focusing employees on core business objectives and goals, garnering financing, or some combination of these or other positive factors. Use the following outline and workspace to develop your own individualized operational plan.

1. Create a mission statement.

Your mission statement should reflect the core purpose of your business and state your basic values and goals in a short, focused sentence of no more than 20 words.

- What is the purpose of the proposed project?
- What benefit will it provide?
- Who are the customers?

2. Create a marketing slogan.

The marketing slogan should consist of a short, perhaps even humorous translation of your mission statement that conveys a single, simple thought about your business to your intended customers.

Space is provided here for each step in creating a business plan but feel free to use your own worksheets so you can have more working space and can rewrite various steps as needed.

Your Business Plan



3. Set measurable goals and objectives.

Goals are long-term—three to five years out. Objectives are things you want to accomplish in the next year or two.

Areas to consider include sales volume, profits, customer satisfaction, owner compensation, number of employees, and employee development.

To set goals and objectives, ask yourself the five basic questions:

- What?
- Why?
- How?
- When?
- Who?

Then set timelines to match your goals and objectives.

- Who will be responsible for each activity?
- Who are the key employees and what are their titles?
- How long do you plan to operate this venture?
- How many hours per week are you willing to commit to this venture?
- Where do you see the business in three to five years?
- How do you plan to achieve customer satisfaction?



4. Gather information from reputable sources to support your plan.

Some resources are provided later in this manual. You will want to know about potential visitor days; customer expenditures, preferences, and interests; and competition and complementary services in your area. These types of information are available from associations such as convention and visitor bureaus, chambers of commerce, and the like.

5. Describe your farm or ranch recreation enterprise.

- When was it started or is projected to start?
- Why was it started?
- Who started it?
- How does the recreation or agritourism enterprise fit in with your overall farm or ranch operation?
- How are you structured as a business—sole proprietorship, general partnership, limited partnership, regular corporation, chapter S corporation?





6. Describe your product or service.

- Identify the products you will market.
- Why should people purchase your products and services?
- What makes them unique?
- What will it cost to provide these services and products?
- How much will you charge?
- How does your operation compare with similar recreation enterprises?
- What kinds of complementary services are there in your area?

7. Define your customers.

Who are the people you are targeting for your enterprise?

Describe them in terms of gender, age, income, occupation, location, family status, number of children, education, and interests. For example, if you are developing a fee hunting enterprise, you will probably look primarily at males in the twenty-five to fifty age range. See the Resources section at the end of this publication for information on U.S. Census Bureau data available online.





8. Compete or complement?

Since farm and ranch recreation and agritourism is a relatively new and emerging industry, state agencies encourage enterprises to work together to attract visitors, share resources, and market services. However, you should first carefully develop and evaluate your business and products given your personal resources and activities.

9. Develop a marketing strategy.

Your marketing and advertising methods may be as simple as word-of-mouth promotion and repeat business or it could involve an ad campaign with printed materials, radio spots, newspaper or other media advertising, and mass mailings. Marketing and advertising are covered more fully in the next section, but you should include your marketing strategy in your business plan.

10. Describe your management team.

- Include a resume of each owner and key employee.
- Identify outside consultants and advisors, including accountants, lawyers, bankers, and insurance brokers.



11. Define the roles of your employees.

An agritourism enterprise may create a new standard industrial code (SIC) for activities associated with your business, resulting in different Workers Compensation rates and reporting requirements. Consequently, you should treat personnel issues associated with your agricultural operation separately from any personnel issues connected with an agritourism enterprise. Written job descriptions that clearly define duties and a personnel manual may be helpful.

- Identify how many employees you need to run the agritourism enterprise and each one's title, job duties, and required skills.
- If you need additional employees, where and how will you attract them?
- What process will you use to screen and hire employees (job-skill testing, job interviews, etc.).
- What training needs will you face?
- Who will conduct employee training (in-house, paid consultant, community college, other recreational businesses)?
- How much will training cost?
- How will you set salaries and wages?
- What benefits will you provide?



12. Evaluate your insurance needs.

Identify the types of insurance that you currently have for your business and consider changes and additional coverage that an agritourism enterprise may require. Additional information on insurance is provided in the *Liability Insurance* section of this manual.

13. Inventory your fixed assets.

You will need to identify the fixed assets (assets with a useful life of more than one year) you currently have and those that you will need to purchase. These may include land, buildings, other improvements, machinery, other equipment, livestock, office furniture, and computers.

- Determine the cost and estimated acquisition date.
- Estimate the useful life of each fixed asset. Prepare a monthly depreciation schedule.





14. Determine startup expenses.

Every new enterprise incurs start-up costs—the investments you have to make to open your door for business. Examples include legal fees, accounting fees, license and permit fees, remodeling work, advertising, promotion, and hiring costs.

15. Forecast sales.

Forecasting sales is critical to your enterprise from both a management and a financial point of view. You cannot plan financially if you do not have an idea of the sales you can expect.

- Review your data on products, customers, competitors, and budgets to develop trends and projections.
- Be realistic in making these forecasts.
- Estimate the total market size in dollars of sales per year based on your research and create an analysis of your potential revenue under the worst case, most likely case, and best case scenarios.





16. Plan financing for your enterprise.

Create a financial plan that includes all sources of existing debt plus additional financing that will be needed. Detail your monthly principal and interest payments. Research potential sources of needed capital. Verify your numbers, justify the need, and be enthusiastic but realistic about the enterprise.

17. Detail your operating expenses and cash flow.

Develop a chart of monthly operating expenses. Combine this with your start-up costs, sales forecasts, and debt service to create a cash-flow budget. These cash-flow projections are one of the most critical estimates you will make and potential lenders will examine this information carefully.

18. Analyze all financial aspects of your enterprise.

From the documents you have developed already (sales forecasts, expense sheets, and cash flow projections) you can project your income and develop a break-even analysis, a balance sheet, and other necessary financial documents. These documents are similar to those used for an agricultural business and so are not detailed here

Marketing Your Enterprise

Effective marketing is a key element in determining the success of any business enterprise. Operators who lack experience in marketing a service business often overlook its importance. The best managed agritourism business can fail if prospective clients do not know about it or are not attracted to it. Marketing involves determining what people want, planning and providing products and services to meet those desires, and selecting the most effective way to reach people interested in those products and services.

Developing a Marketing Plan

Your business plan should include your marketing plan. Keep your marketing plan simple. Define your ideal visitors and your services and develop a plan for getting information about your enterprise to potential customers. You must remember to include marketing in each year's budget. As you develop your marketing strategy, identify the two or three strongest selling points of your service or operation. They could be the success rate of a fee-hunting experience, exclusivity and solitude, your facilities and their location and access to area attractions, good prices, or other services you provide. Identifying your target customers will help you to choose the key selling points around which to build your marketing strategy.

Marketing Your Business

The type and amount of marketing you use in a recreation enterprise depends on the specifics of the operation. Marketing can be as simple as word-of-mouth referrals or it can involve an intensive regional, national, or international media campaign. Your marketing style and

There are three basic elements of advertising and promotion.

- **The Message**
Two or three strong selling points and additional information about your service.
- **The Medium**
Printed publications, radio and/or television ads, promotions, etc., and the target audience you are trying to reach. Or you can choose to rely on word-of-mouth referrals.

message must be directed to your targeted groups. If you are providing dude-ranch activities, for example, you may emphasize the experience of riding horses and outdoor activities. Anything you print must reflect your primary selling points in an attractive, high-quality, tasteful presentation. Sloppy advertisements and brochures may reflect negatively on your business.

The Message

Your message should describe the types of activity or enterprise you offer, additional goods and services available, directions to your location, the cost of the activities, and how to make reservations. Try to be original in your marketing. Keep your message



Examples of Common Types of Media

- billboards
- sports shows
- direct mail
- newspapers and magazines
- radio and television
- brochures and newsletters
- videos
- telephone-book listings
- farm trail maps
- travel agents
- cooperative ads
- visitor bureaus and welcome centers
- local sporting good stores
- local hunting and shooting clubs
- trade shows and journals
- websites

simple. Always check dates, fees, addresses, and phone numbers for accuracy. Make certain the goods and services advertised represent what you can deliver. Contact someone experienced in desktop publishing to assist in designing and creating printed pieces if you do not have this ability.

The Medium

Marketing includes a wide range of activities—from public relations and advertising to promotions and trade shows. Advertising is the most expensive medium. You should carefully consider all types of media and focus on those that best fit your budget and reach your target audience. The medium is the method by which your message is delivered to potential customers.

The Target Audience

Target audiences are distinct groups or segments of the population that you want to reach when you employ different

marketing strategies. You may decide to target your service using the characteristics of an ideal visitor, such as their income level, where they live (in or out of state, urban versus rural, international), their ages, and their preferences for lodging and level of involvement—self-guided versus guided experiences, for example.

If people currently visit your operation without paying a fee for hunting, fishing, or wildlife viewing, you may want to conduct a survey of their interests and their willingness and ability to pay for services.

Marketing Costs

The cost of marketing for an agritourism enterprise largely depends on the size and type of your operation, the media you select, and the number of times you repeat advertisements. New operations typically spend 10 to 25 percent of total operational costs on marketing during the first few years. It is important to keep good records about responses to specific marketing efforts so you can hone the effectiveness of your efforts. Survey all customers about how they found out about your operation. Over time, as your reputation develops, marketing costs will decrease.

The Importance of Public Relations

Public relations is defined as creating and maintaining a favorable image. It is part of marketing and advertising but goes further. As a landowner, you should always be concerned with your business image. Your public relations goals can range from client satisfaction with their experiences to acceptance of your operation by neighbors, local community leaders, and the public. It is worth the effort to foster the support of neighbors, state and federal agencies, local sheriff and law enforcement personnel, citizen groups, and your local chamber of commerce or visitor bureau.

Marketing Equals the Four Ps

Product Features • Place • Promotion • Price

Part of marketing is identifying the mix of these elements that makes your service unique—also known as a “marketing mix.” The next step is to shape your marketing mix and position its components to create a unique identity for your business that attracts and retains customers. Your market position is one or more selected benefits or features that make your operation unique and appealing to specific clientele groups.

Steps in Defining Your Marketing Mix

- Identify your target market.
- Determine what your target visitors want.
- Assess whether you have any advantages over your competition in delivering the desired service.
- Choose the position that is most valued by customers.

Potential Themes for Your Operation and Products

- Identifying the *feature* that makes your product or service different from the offerings of competing attractions (examples include a restaurant on an organic farm, a bed and breakfast at an exotic animal farm, and a cornfield maze at a u-pick produce stand).
- The length of *time* your organization has been in business, such as a farm that has been family owned and operated for more than a century.
- The *unique people* involved in your operation, such as a nationally-renowned horse trainer who offers clinics, a cowboy poet who does readings, or country-fair blue ribbon winner who provides home-cooked meals.

Photograph courtesy of USDA, Natural Resources Conservation District



Product Features

- Product Quality
- Staff Quality
- Scenic Beauty
- Style (Lifestyle)
- Brand Name
- Packaging
- Parking
- Optional Services
- Guarantees

Place (Distribution)

- Location
- Terms of Service
- Transportation
- Access

Promotion

- Publicity
- Sales Promotion
- Personal Selling
- Advertising
- Mailing List
- Internet

Price (Cost)

- List Price
- Discounts

- Your *location*, such as the heart of prime bird-watching habitat, within an hour of the Pacific Ocean, or far off the beaten path.
- The *size* of your operation as, for example, a small, intimate inn on a working ranch or a 120,000-acre cattle ranch.
- The *benefits* of your product or services, such as “catch the romantic spirit of the West,” “restful solitude and tranquility,” “fulfill a childhood dream,” or “guaranteed catch.”
- The *services* you offer, such as outdoor recreation for young singles.
- An *affordable price*.
- Your *reputation*.
- The *lifestyle-defining aspect* of your offering, such as “escape the ordinary” or “edge-of-danger rock climbing.”



Customer Relations

A satisfied customer is the most important asset to a successful operation. Satisfied customers not only return but also tell friends and family members about your operation. Learn their names. Remember what they like and have it ready for them when they return. Keep a database to help you remember. The little personal touches can make a big difference.

Develop a Mailing List

Get names from outdoor magazines, associations, and other resources for people who like outdoor activities. Your mailing list is an important asset—use it at least twice a year.

Recognize Why People Visit your Operation

Visitors do not come to your operation to hunt or fish or ride—they come to have fun and relax. You are in the hospitality business, so take care of your customers and you will succeed. Always ask customers what they liked about their visit and what can be improved.

Pay Attention to Details

Make sure that your telephone is answered professionally (“Anderson Ranch” rather than “hello”). Your answering machine should have a professional message. Return calls promptly.

Inform your neighbors about your operation. Join the local chamber of commerce. Talk to operators of nearby gas stations, cafes, motels, and farms. Give people your brochure and make sure that people in your area know about you.

Send Out Information

Send information about your company, news releases, and story ideas to magazines and newspapers. Invite them out for a free

visit. Follow up mailings with personal calls. Think of things that will interest them.

Obtain brochures and literature from operations that are similar to yours and see what they offer and what they charge.

Look at their brochures to see what you like and do not like. Improve your materials accordingly. You can obtain addresses and phone numbers of operations from outdoor recreation magazines. Owners are generally willing to give you half an hour of free advice. Call them and tell them you are just starting out and ask if you can have a few minutes of their time to ask some questions.

Advertise

Advertise in the telephone book. Also consider ads in the Yellow Pages in target markets. Place signs on your property that can be seen from the road. Make sure people can find you and have a way to contact you.

Produce Good Quality Brochures and Marketing Materials

Avoid cluttering a brochure with too many words. Use photos. Hire a graphic artist or get feedback from other operators before you go to print. Do print on a photocopier. Color brochures are costlier than black and white ones but show your commitment to quality and attract more attention.



Conducting Farm and Ranch Tours

Appropriate planning is essential if you wish to present a positive image of your farm and be well prepared to host a group visit. Farm tours should not generally be conducted in an ad hoc manner. It is important to think about what kinds of images you want your visitors to take away from a tour—impressions, experiences, knowledge, facts, products.



Things to Consider in Assessing Whether You Are Ready to Provide a Tour

- When is the best time of year to provide tours? Fall is a colorful time for farm tours across the U.S. Is your weather generally good at that time? Are unsightly chores like manure spreading or machinery cleaning occurring then?
- Will you charge a fee to offset the time and labor expended on the tour and to provide an economic return? If so, what fees will you charge?
- Will you offer refreshments? If so, check with your local health department regarding regulations concerning your ability to serve food and any regulations that affect such an event.
- Can visitors safely tour your facility? Remember, safety is your responsibility!
- Is your farm relatively clean and in good repair? Do you adhere to good pest and waste management programs? Are you prepared to answer questions about your practices?
- Will your tour present a positive image of agriculture? Are there opportunities to demonstrate resource sensitivity such as by providing habitat for wildlife with hedgerows and ponds for waterfowl?
- Is your farm accessible to persons with disabilities? If not, you want to make this clear before the tour. See the section of this handbook on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for compliance issues.



Preparing for the Tour

- Develop rules for photography. You need to decide whether visitors can take pictures of everything they see or only in certain areas. Consider providing a specific location for group/family commemorative photos where pictures can be taken beside a farm sign, farm product, or other piece of memorabilia.
- Be sure you have paid adequate attention to hygiene facilities. Assess the adequacy of your bathroom and hand washing arrangements, especially if visitors will be handling animals and then dining.
- Provide for adequate waste disposal in eating areas.
- Pay attention to public relations. Call your neighbors to let them know about the tours.
- Consider esthetics. Ensure that anything unsightly is not in view.

The Tour Schedule and Presentation

- Develop a tour schedule and a verbal presentation that can be modified to fit the interests and backgrounds of visitors.
- Post signs that clearly outline safety requirements.
- View your operation through the eyes of a visitor. Point out the obvious and explain the reasons behind specific operations.
- Emphasize a theme throughout the tour, such as recycling, sustainable agriculture, food quality, animal welfare, agriculture and the environment, or conservation.
- Discuss your production systems, following the food chain from conception to consumption, from seed to tomato sauce, from cow to milk and cheese, from lamb to wool. Talk about the diverse markets your products serve, including by-products.
- Select three to five points of emphasis that you want to reinforce throughout the tour. What would you like guests to have learned by the end of your tour?

Whenever possible, make it an interactive, hands-on, experience. For example, if you will provide a tour of an apple orchard, show pictures or point to trees in different stages of growth. Describe the production cycle. How much will a tree produce at peak yield (relate

the yield to something your audience can easily understand, such as “as much as two children weigh”). Discuss why you grow apples here (soil, weather, and water). Describe the steps the apples go through before reaching the market. Explain the challenges and uncertainties you deal with when producing apples (pests, changing regulations, labor-force issues, changing markets). But do not bore your audience with your pet peeves. They are interested in recreation, relaxation, and education.

- Provide safe, organized, hands-on opportunities for children, such as touching seeds or the warm pipes in a milk barn and the cool milk tank or petting and feeding animals. For younger children (preschool to third grade), use body language to accompany your verbal explanation to help them learn and keep them involved.
- How many people can you comfortably accommodate in a group and still conduct an effective tour? Practice the tour with other staff members who will also be leading groups. Organize the tour so different groups do not get mixed up.



- Practice the tour program with a person who is not involved in your operation and get their feedback.
- Walk your tour. See how long it takes. Is the terrain level and well drained?

Tour Contact

- Determine the general age and abilities of the members of the tour group in terms of the approximate number of adults and children and why the group wants to visit your farm. Establish a comfortable ratio of chaperones to children and youth if you feel it necessary.
- Discuss parking and provide directions to parking facilities.
- Suggest clothing that enhances safety, such as closed-toe, low-heel shoes and comfortable clothing. Suggest people bring hats and sunscreen in summer and warm clothing in other seasons.
- Discuss meals. Will the group be eating while on your property? What will meals cost? Are picnicking facilities adequate?

Briefing the Group

- If visitors arrive by bus, greet them before they exit.. Some tour buses have a public address system that you can use to address the guests.
- Introduce yourself and firmly but politely establish expectations regarding conduct and behavior (appropriate for the age group).
- Remind visitors that your farm is a working, production-oriented operation, not an amusement park.
- Children should be advised to walk, remember that rocks stay on the ground,



stay with the group, be good listeners, and raise their hands when they have questions.

- Prepare visitors for routine unavoidable environmental hazards such as odors, flies, dust, and loud noises. However, to the extent that you can, take steps to mitigate these environmental irritants.

Conducting the Tour

- Walk at a pace appropriate to the group's size and age.
- Have a responsible person at the rear of the group to assist with keeping the group together.
- Discuss what the group will see before entering a noisy area.
- Children should be encouraged to repeat new words and concepts as you explain them.
- Be sure to explain any agriculture terms that may be foreign to your guests. Think of ways to relate concepts and terms to everyday life.
- Answer only questions about what you know and limit your comments to your farm. Avoid ideological debates with guests or customers.

Concluding the Tour

- Allow plenty of time for questions.
- Review the main concepts you introduced and refer to the key theme(s). For children's groups, use a fill-in-the-blank method, encouraging the children to participate and thus reinforcing the information.
- Samples of your products (empty containers, pictures, or actual products) provide a great ending. Provide information on where and how they can purchase your products.
- Escort the group to the bus or parking area, thanking them for their visit. Encourage them to return.



Post-tour Review

- Ask for an evaluation from the tour contact. What did the visitors like? What would help the group to better assimilate the information? What suggestions do they have for improving the tour?
- Establish and update a file of these notes. Review this feedback and information with other tour staff members before the next tour.

On-Farm Customer Relations

Customers visit your farm or ranch for the experience. Direct your attention to the best ways to make your visitors feel welcome and comfortable. You want them to return as well as to tell others about you. Remember that your best promotion tool is word of mouth.

Staff Orientation

Staff training is an essential component in ensuring a high level of customer satisfaction. Staff must be knowledgeable about your operation and your services and products as well as about the amenities available in the local area. They should be familiar with area attractions and local restaurants and accommodations. Also, your employees should be easily identified by their clothing and nametags. Use the Community Data Bank quiz in the box to help you assess each person's knowledge of the local community.

Welcoming Visitors

Welcome each customer with enthusiasm and a smile. For example, say "Hi, my name is . . . Welcome to . . ."
Ask how you can assist them:

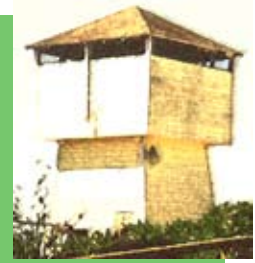
- How may I help you?
- May I direct you to _____?"

Be pleasant, courteous, and sincere.

Explain what your facility offers. For example, "The produce stand featuring our own _____ is here, the tour meets over there, and the bathrooms are around the corner." Always have time for your customers.



Community Data Bank



Can you answer the questions tourists most frequently ask about your community and the surrounding area?

- Are there any museums or historical sites in the community?
- What kinds of lodging accommodations are available?
- Can you recommend a good place to eat?
- Are there any local activities or special events occurring soon?
- Where can I get service for my car?
- Where will I find tourist information?
- What local recreational activities and parks are available and where are they located?
- Are there any other local tours available?
- Where are local retail stores located?
- What is it like living in this community?

Source: Michigan State University Extension Bulletin E-2064, 1987.

Retail Sales

Be sure to post prices for products and services so that they are easily visible to customers. Use simple per-item or per-pound charges. State the methods of payment that you accept (cash, check, and/or charge). Also state your returned-check policy. Vary product quantities and sizes. Indicate any recipes you provide, recommendations for preserving products for long drives, and whether or not you ship your products.

Educate your visitors. Assist them in selecting the best product for their needs and explain what qualities are desirable for different purposes. Answer questions about how the product was grown and processed. Explain what makes your product better or different than others on the market.

Place smaller sale items on higher shelves to make them more difficult to shoplift. Popular items should be placed in clear view of the cashier.

Recipes and Handouts

Check with your commodity board for recipes and handouts. Some commodity boards also have promotion posters to add to your display. Work with a local chef to develop and offer recipes for the commodity you sell/promote. Also search the internet for recipes.

You-Picks

You-pick operations need signs identifying the areas of the field that are available for picking, how to pick without damaging plants, and where to walk between plants to avoid causing damage. You also may want to post a sign about over-picking, such as "Only pick what you intend to buy. But if you discover you picked a little extra,



please bring the extra produce to us. Please do not throw it on the ground."

Customer Mailing List

Consider using a guest book where visitors can add their names to a mailing list for your newsletter or reminder notices.

Monitoring Customer Behavior

Organize your store, facility or u-pick operation so that there is only one entrance and one exit to monitor. For a u-pick, this may mean temporary fencing or ropes around the field with the entrance/exit located near the parking area, eliminating the opportunity for customers to walk directly from the picking area to their cars. If you suspect a customer has shoplifted, immediately contact the local authorities and provide the car's license number, make, and model and a description of the person. DO NOT try to stop the person yourself. This only upsets you and the customer and may result in an argument or worse in front of other custom-

ers. To reduce the risk of car thefts and break-ins, separate the employee parking from the public parking area.

Evaluation

Improvements in customer satisfaction require good listening and communication skills. Find out what visitors like. Ask them how you can improve your services. Have short, easy-to-complete comment or suggestion cards that customers can drop in a suggestion box. Create a self-assessment checklist for you and your staff. Meet regularly to review your performance.

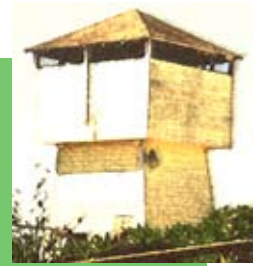
Dealing with Customer Concerns

If customers have complaints or concerns, listen to their problems or frustrations without interruption. Ease the situation by remaining calm and attempting to understand the problem completely. Calmly ask questions to ensure that everyone understands the situation. Suggest several options and give visitors the courtesy of making their own decisions.

Adding Value and Personalizing Your Services

As you evaluate your enterprise and the two or three key assets that will be your main selling points, consider the following ideas for ways to add extra value for your visitors. Remember—it is the little things that impress guests and ensure their return. Happy customers are also likely to tell friends and family about your farm or ranch.

- Refreshments are one way to add value to your guests' experience. Select products that complement what you produce on your farm or ranch, such as cheese samples, fresh bread, apple juice, or beef jerky.
- You can also distribute recipes, pamphlets, pins, posters, and other promotional items. Many commodity commissions and agricultural trade organizations already offer promotional items free of charge or at a nominal cost.
- Consider fun, entertaining activities such as contests, adult and children's classes, or games ranging from guessing how many apples are in a barrel to horseshoe throwing and bake-offs. Children love straw mazes, art projects, and scarecrow making. Adults enjoy historic displays and classes in activities such as painting or growing an herb garden. But visitors do not need to be entertained constantly. Allow time for them to rest and relax. Remember that some guests are simply looking for an escape from their busy routines. The better you profile the customers you want to attract, the easier it will be to create appropriate activities for your guests.



Safety and Risk Management



Agricultural tourism can be a mutually beneficial exchange between agriculturists and urban residents. It can help agriculturists learn more about urban concerns while enabling urban residents to learn about farming and enjoy nature. It can also increase farm income if a fee is charged for farm visits or if products are sold to visitors. However, farm visits imply risks and potential liability to farm owners should accidents occur that result in injuries to visitors. There is a need, therefore, to pursue prudent risk management strategies to minimize your exposure to liability.

Safety is your first priority when entertaining visitors to your farm or ranch and when consumers visit your operation to participate in picking or other farming experiences, including farm tours. Your visitors' safety is largely your responsibility. Review the following suggestions as a guide to assessing your operation for potential hazards and to prepare for a safe, enjoyable visit.

Managing and Reducing Risks

- Identify the specific areas that guests will visit, the activities in which they will participate, how they will be supervised, the safety precautions you will take, and any rules you will need to post. For some activities (horseback riding, for example) a "hold harmless agreement" may be a good idea. A hold-harmless agreement indicates that the visitor is willing to assume responsibility for certain risks. It does not, however, totally absolve you of responsibility for the health and safety of your visitors.
- Plan for emergencies and keep a well stocked first aid kit handy. Be sure knowledgeable people on staff have training in CPR and first aid. Develop an emergency plan for dealing with natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and fires.
- Suggest that visitors wear appropriate clothing such as closed-toed shoes (tennis shoes or boots but not sandals). Long pants are recommended for some activities.
- When you brief visitors, explain that you operate a working production facility that naturally comes with certain hazards (uneven ground, insects, climate, farm odors) and that visitors must accept those risks and exercise reasonable caution.
- Clearly demarcate off-limits areas and specifically designated public areas. Rope off or block access to areas that might be hazardous to the uninvited.
- One essential tool for managing risk is liability insurance. Before hosting groups of visitors or planning a public event, check with your insurance agent about the adequacy of your liability coverage. An event insurance rider may be necessary.



Facilities and Equipment

- **Parking:** Most counties require that cars park completely off the paved road. Do you have adequate space for the expected number of vehicles?
- **Buses:** If buses must park away from your farm, plan for a drop-off and loading area.
- **Bathrooms:** Do you have clean, well stocked public restrooms in good operation? If you expect large numbers of visitors, consider renting portable units. Provide hand-washing facilities and wipes or sanitizing cleaner in a convenient area.
- **Security:** Depending on the event, you may want to employ additional help to ensure that guests do not put themselves or your farm operation at risk.
- **Ladders:** Store ladders away from trees and public spaces to eliminate the temptation to climb. This is particularly important with regard to young people.
- **Tractors and Equipment:** Park tractors and equipment within eyesight (if desired) but away from the visitor areas. Agricultural equipment fascinates people; however, a tractor often becomes a climbing object for children (even when supervised by adults). Discuss tractor safety and instill respect for the equipment. Never allow visitors to drive farm equipment.



- **Pest Management Materials:** Pesticides, herbicides, and other farm management products should be safely stored in a secure location that is preferably away from public view. Shops and repair facilities are among the most hazardous places on the farm and generally should be off-limits to the public. Close the doors and/or place a rope across the entrance with a “Do Not Enter” sign. Have farm personnel check these areas often.

Livestock and Animals

All interactions between animals and guests should be supervised by farm staff. Animals behave differently around a crowd of unfamiliar people. They should be penned or confined for viewing with limited, controlled access for petting. Carefully select the most healthy and “user friendly” animals for public interaction, but remember that animal well-being comes first. Give adequate attention to odors, ventilation, manure, flies, and pest control in the visitor area.

- **Pets:** Ensure that only very friendly, social dogs will be near the public. However, warn visitors of a puppy’s sharp teeth. Even friendly dogs can do damage. With cats and kittens, remember their sharp claws and teeth.

- **Small livestock:** Goats and sheep are most commonly used for petting because

ruminants have no top front teeth and so can be handled more safely than other animals like horses. Also, their small size reduces the risk of injury if they step on a child’s foot.

- Poultry: Geese can be very aggressive but chickens, ducks, and other poultry may be fed. However, to limit stress on the animals, take care to rotate animals frequently.
- Cattle and calves: Restrain any cow that will be handled, preferably in a grooming chute. Calves should be controlled. Hand-milking is not recommended.
- Horses and ponies: Warn visitors that animals may bite. Horse and pony riding requires special rules and insurance. Consult your agent.
- Handwashing: Post a “PLEASE WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER HANDLING ANIMALS” sign.



Photograph courtesy of USDA , Natural Resources Conservation District

- Insist that participants follow the rules—no smoking, stay seated, legs away from wheels. The tractor should be driven no faster than an adult can jog. If there are problems, stop immediately.
- Check your route regularly for potholes, irrigation flooding, and other hazards that may change daily.

Lagoons and Ponds

Water is of special concern because of its attraction to children. Make sure that no visitor will be near water (secure with temporary fencing, cones and/or ropes). Do not trust parents to watch their children.

Hayrides

Hayrides are popular with farm visitors, but safety precautions must be taken. Also, additional insurance may be necessary for this activity.

- Establish a maximum rider load that provides safe seating for all occupants.



Insurance Coverage for Legal and Liability Risks

When farmers go from traditional agriculture to agritourism and add activities such as petting zoos, wagon rides, corn mazes, and playgrounds, they become more like service establishments. Once you allow people to enter your premises on a commercial basis, all the rules change. Recognize that an entirely new way of doing business is necessary.

A farm should have adequate liability insurance in case of an accident on the farm. You can choose to use your own insurance company or opt for an agent that specializes in agritourism and farm coverage. Insurance policies are backups to the risk management techniques that you already employ to protect your family, employees, and visitors. Insurance should not be used as your only “insurance” against risks in your agritourism operation but rather as one essential component of your risk management plan.

You will most likely need to consider insurance policies that include both your farm or ranch and your agritourism operation as a subdivision of that business unless agritourism is your main business.

Buying Coverage

When researching insurance policies, know what your policy will cover and what it will not cover, as well as deadlines for dates of purchase and renewal. Topics to research include the types of losses that are covered and the physical entities eligible for protection.

Insurance agents in smaller communities typically represent smaller, local insurance carriers and only a few, if any, larger well-known insurance companies. Large insurance companies tend to believe that farmers as entertainment operators are a big risk

because they will not practice proper safety standards that minimize losses or that they do not have the expertise and skills required to handle public liability expo-

sure. Also, there is no way for these large companies to develop one policy that fits all agritourism operations since each one is different. Large companies prefer to cover commercial businesses that are familiar.

Farmers need an insurance company that will take on the unusual risks of agritourism. In the jargon of insurance, these carriers are called excess and surplus (E&S) lines companies. Companies providing such coverage typically are not well-known household names. Rather, the E&S community specializes in difficult placements. Often these carriers are actually subsidiaries of the large groups.

Find an insurance broker who represents multiple insurance carriers, some of whom will write E&S policies. Brokers typically can write policies in many states with a large number of companies. Ask your local agent, who is trained to understand the insurance system and knows how to access brokers. In many states, you can call the



state department of insurance and explain your situation and they can give you a list of people to call. You can also call the Independent Agents Association to get a reference to an agent in your area.

Premiums will be higher for E&S policies than for policies for traditional agriculture but will be based on the specific activities you offer. There is likely to be a minimum premium below which the company will not issue a policy. In most states, the Farm Bureau insurance carrier is expanding its product offerings to include agritourism liability policies. Check with your local Farm Bureau agent for a quote.

Regardless of the type of business you run, it is essential that you protect yourself and your property from disasters and liabilities. Small operations can be more vulnerable to lawsuits because of the high cost of legal defense. These costs, as well as your ability to defend yourself in court, could result in the loss of your business and/or bankruptcy. Risk management entails being well informed. Additionally, you may wish to purchase insurance to cover court fees/attorney fees, as well as seek a consultant to ensure compliance with governmental regulations.

General Types of Insurance Coverage

- **Property Coverage:** Commercial insurance coverage covers broad areas of property associated with the business, such as buildings and other content. Outdoor signs, criminal damage, and others' property may also be covered.
- **Commercial Automobile:** Commercial auto insurance covers use of automobiles employed for business purposes, which likely is not covered in your personal auto policy. Additionally, employees may be covered while using the business vehicle.
- **Liability:** Liability coverage covers sums of money you could be obligated to pay due to bodily injury or property damage. If you do not own your building, your landlord normally must be added as an additional insured on the policy to protect her. Liability covers the premises and operations of the insured as well as products and completed operations. Liability insurance is especially important in agritourism operations, which involves hosting the public on your property.
- **Business Interruption:** Business interruption insurance can cover income lost as a result of closing of your business due to natural catastrophes or accidents such as fire.
- **Workers Compensation:** Workers compensation insurance protects your employees if they suffer job-related injuries. The policy pays the medical bills for the employee who is injured on the job. If time off is required due to the injury, the policy pays disability income to the injured worker.
- **Key Man:** Key-man insurance protects key individuals in a business. If you operate with a business loan, your banker may require such insurance (or life insurance) as a way for the bank to get its money back if you are incapacitated in some way. Sole proprietors generally do not carry key-man insurance but partnerships may.

California Agricultural Homestay Bill (AB 1258)



The California Agricultural Homestay Bill (AB 1258), passed in July 1999, paved the way for more farmers and ranchers to offer tourists overnight visits. The bill exempts farms and ranching operations that offer overnight stays from the more stringent requirements of operating a commercial restaurant. To qualify for overnight stays, the farms and ranches must produce agricultural products as their primary source of income. Additionally, farmers are limited to six guest rooms and fifteen visitors a night—less than the amount allowed for a bed and breakfast operation. The following information about AB 1258 is an excerpt from the Official California Legislative Information website. For more details, go to www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html.

AB 1258 Chapter 180
An act to amend section 113870 of the Health and Safety Code relating to public health.

Public Health: **Agricultural Homestay Establishments**

The California Uniform Retail Food Facilities Law regulates sanitary standards in retail food establishments.

This bill would expand the definition of “restricted food service transient occupancy establishment” to include an agricultural homestay establishment. Because local health agencies are partially responsible for enforcement of the law’s provisions, the expansion of the law constitutes a state-mandated local program.

Because existing law makes a violation of any of its provisions a misdemeanor, by creating a new crime, this bill would constitute a state-mandated local program.

The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement, including the creation of a State Mandates Claims Fund to pay the costs of mandates that do not exceed \$1,000,000 statewide and other procedures for claims whose statewide costs exceed \$1,000,000.

This bill would provide that, with regard to certain mandates no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

With regard to any other mandates, this bill would provide that, if the Commission on

State Mandates determines that the bill contains costs mandated by the state, reimbursement for those costs shall be made pursuant to the statutory provisions previously noted.

Photograph courtesy of USDA, Natural Resources Conservation District



The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

Section 1. Section 113870 of the Health and Safety Code is amended to read:

- (a) “Restricted food service transient occupancy establishment” means either of the following:
- (1) An establishment of 20 guest rooms or less, that provides overnight transient occupancy accommodations, that serves food only to its registered guests, that serves only a breakfast or similar early morning meal, and no other meals, and with respect to which the price of food is included in the price of the overnight transient occupancy accommodation.
 - (2) An agricultural homestay establishment that meets all of the following requirements:
 - (A) Has not more than six guest rooms or accommodates not more than 15 guests.
 - (B) Provides overnight transient accommodations.
 - (C) Serves food only to its registered guests and serves meals at any time, and with respect to which the price of food is included in the price of the overnight transient occupancy accommodation.
 - (D) Lodging and meals are incidental and not the primary function of the agricultural homestay establishment.
 - (E) The agricultural homestay establishment is located on, and is a part of, a farm, as defined in Section 52262 of the Food and Agricultural Code, that produces agricultural products as its primary source of income.

- (b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a restricted food service transient occupancy establishment may serve light foods or snacks presented to the guest for self-service.
- (c) For purposes of this section, “restricted food service transient occupancy establishment” refers to an establishment as to which the predominant relationship between the occupants thereof and the owner or operator of the establishment is that of innkeeper and guest. For purposes of this section, the existence of some other legal relationships as between some occupants and the owner or operator shall be immaterial.

Section 2. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution for certain costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district because in that regard this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

However, notwithstanding Section 17610 of the Government Code, if the Commission on State Mandates determines that this act contains other costs mandated by the state, reimbursement to local agencies and school districts for those costs shall be made pursuant to Part 7 (commencing with Section 17500) of Division 4 of Title 2 of the Government Code. If the statewide cost of the claim for reimbursement does not exceed one million dollars (\$1,000,000), reimbursement shall be made from the State Mandates Claims Fund.

The Americans with Disabilities Act

The proliferation of disability legislation over the past ten years has given rise to increased litigation against businesses that may not be in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and its California counterparts—sections of the Unruh Civil Rights Act and the Health and Safety Code (specifically Title 24 of the California Building Code). These cases are typically filed on behalf of disabled consumers against businesses that allegedly fail to provide equal access to public facilities. In fact, disabled access litigation has become a virtual cottage industry since the ADA was enacted more than ten years ago. More recently, agritourism operations



ADA in a Nutshell

Accessibility routes consist of walking surfaces with a maximum slope of 1 :20, marked crossings at vehicular roadways, clear floor space at accessible elements, access aisles, ramps, curbs, and elevators.

- Floor surfaces should be firm, stable and slip-resistant.
- Avoid changes in level and use of stairs.
- Use ramps only where necessary.
- Facilities should be identifiable to the blind by raised lettering, audible warning signals, and textured surfaces to indicate stairs and hazardous openings.
- Facilities should be usable.
- Circulation spaces should be adequate for comfortable movement.

All public facilities should have fixtures designed for use by persons with disabilities.

Specifics

- Cane range: 6 inches minimum to either side or 27 inches high.
- Up to a 0.25 inch change in level ground may be vertical.
- Changes in level from 0.25 inches to 0.50 inch should be beveled with a slope not steeper than 1.20 inches.
- Changes in level greater than 0.50 inches must be ramped.
- 36-inch minimum clearance width for passage and 60 inches for two wheelchairs to pass.
- 60-inch minimum clearance circle or a t-shaped space with arms at least 36 inches wide and 60 inches long to allow a wheelchair to turn.
- 30 inches by 48 inches minimum of clear floor space required for either forward or parallel approach to an object.
- Maximum reach height of 48 inches for reach depths up to 20 inches; maximum reach height of 44 inches for reach depths from 20 to 25 inches; 54 inches maximum and 15 inches minimum side reach above the floor.

such as winery tasting rooms have been targeted for ADA lawsuits. Many in California have been settled out of court for undisclosed sums that reportedly range from \$1,000 to \$100,000. Some businesses have declared bankruptcy or been forced to shut their doors until disability lawsuits are settled. What can you, as an agritourism operator, do to avoid having to face a similar situation?

The best defense is a good offense. Educate yourself about disability laws and regulations and be sure your business is in compliance if you are open to the public. Potential resources include your insurance agent, local licensed contractors, attorneys who specialize in disability access law, your colleagues, government agencies such as your area Small Business Association office, your local building department, the Department of Justice Civil Rights division and California's Health and Safety division. For websites and contact information see the Resources section.

The Americans with Disabilities Act is federal legislation enacted in 1990. The relevant requirements for alteration/new construction and barrier removal became effective in 1992.

California Building Code (CBC)

- Health & Safety Code Section 19559 was passed in 1971 for repairs, alterations, and additions.
- In 1982 California Building Code (CBC) Title 24 access requirements were enacted and have been revised regularly.
- For alterations/new construction, the CBC edition in effect when the permit was approved applies.
- Generally speaking, disability access must be provided in areas of alteration, the path of travel to the area, and the sanitary facilities that support the area. There is an unreasonable-hardship exception to the access requirement if the cost of providing the accessible path of travel equals or exceeds 20 percent of the work of improvement but it must be applied for and approved. Some business owners have found that it is safest in the long run to simply meet the CBC requirements.

For agritourism operations, Title III is the relevant section of the ADA that requires public accommodations to provide equal access to facilities. Standards vary based on when a facility was built or altered:

- a. New construction (built after January 1992) must comply with the New Construction Standards of the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG).
- b. Altered areas (built after January 1992) must comply with the Alteration/New Construction Standards of ADAAG, where technically feasible and less stringent standards where technical issues are found. Alterations also create an obligation to improve path of travel and restrooms.
- c. Existing buildings (no alterations since January 1992) must achieve a level of



usability that balances the constraints of existing conditions with the resources available for remedial work. Because this legal language is vague, most ADA lawsuits revolve

around this “Barrier Removal” provision.

There are different requirements for ADA and the CBC including:

- Parking widths, aisles and signage
- Curb ramps
- Path of travel
- Transaction counters
- Food and drink counters
- Entry signage
- Door effort
- Showers

Making buildings accessible to persons with disabilities is an increasingly important design requirement. The model codes (e.g. CBC) have incorporated requirements for accessibility that are intended to be coordinated with the ADA requirements. The designer must remember, however, that plan review by your local building official is only for compliance with the provisions of the California Building Code. The model codes are typically not considered to be equivalent substitutions for the ADA and compliance with the code is no guarantee of compliance with the ADA. Therefore, every project should be carefully reviewed against the provisions of the ADA to assure compliance with federal law. Remember that approval by the building official has no bearing on applicability of the ADA. The building official does not

review for ADA compliance and has neither authority nor responsibility to enforce this federal law.

The code basis for access clearances and reach ranges is primarily for people who use wheelchairs. It is important to remember that the definition of disability also includes sensory and cognitive impairments, not just mobility impairments. Designers must also accommodate people with visual impairments and people with hearing impairments. A design solution for one group of people should not adversely impact another group with different disabilities.

Accessibility to buildings is monitored closely by a large number of groups. They review access to buildings on a regular basis. A challenge to the accessibility of a business is among the most likely post-occupancy code reviews that can happen after the completion of a project. Any decisions that lead to a lack of access are subject to scrutiny over the life of the project.

Not sure?
Opting to provide
full disability
access is the
safest choice.

ADA Resources

The U.S. Department of Justice website provides links to several publications for small business owners looking for guidance on the ADA. They also have a toll-free information line and a technical assistance program.

Go to www.ada.gov or call 1.800.514.0301 or 1.800.514.0383 (TTY). This number also has information about their “Fax on Demand” program that allows the public to obtain free ADA information via fax twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. There are dozens of technical assistance publications to choose from. For example, the ADA’s *Guide for Small Businesses* is a fifteen-

page publication with illustrations and additional resource information that would be relevant for agritourism operators.

U.S. Department of Justice Americans with Disabilities Act Website

www.ada.gov

State Departments

Department of Rehabilitation ADA Technical Assistance Section

P.O. Box 944222
Sacramento, CA 94244-2220
916.263.8674
www.dor.ca.gov

California Building Officials

2125 21st Street
Sacramento CA 95818
916.457.1103
www.calbo.org

Division of the State Architect Office of Universal Design Access Compliance

1130 K Street, Suite 101
Sacramento, CA 95814
916.322.4700
www.dsa.dgs.ca.gov

Books

California Accessibility Resource Manual
California Code of Regulations, Title 24
(can be found at either Division of the State Architect or Builders Bookstore).

Attorneys

The following attorneys have some experience in disability access lawsuits. Their inclusion in this publication is not an endorsement of their services or expertise. You may also want to contact the local Bar Association for referrals.

David Goldman

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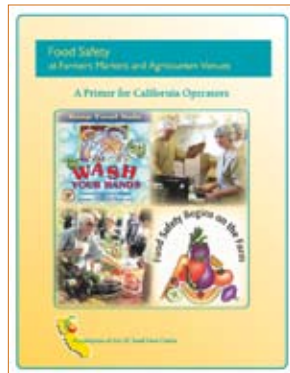
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Agritourism and Nature Tourism Resources

Books

Food Safety at Farmers Markets and Agritourism Venues



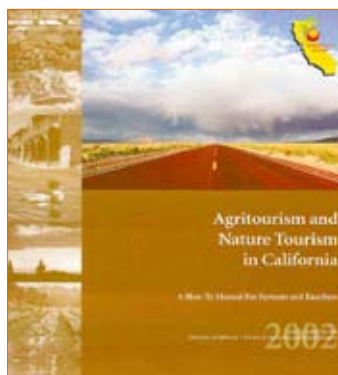
A basic guide to understanding food-safety issues relevant to California agritourism operations and certified farmers markets.

Available from the UC Small Farm Center.
Published in 2005, 36 pages
\$8.00

Agritourism and Nature Tourism in California: A How-To Manual for Farmers and Ranchers

A comprehensive resource guide for farmers and ranchers who wish to begin agritourism or nature tourism operations on their farms or ranches in a binder format with detachable pages.

Available from the UC Small Farm Center.
Published in 2002, 339 pages
\$25.00



Booklet Version

An updated version of the comprehensive 2002 manual in a more colorful format. It will walk you through the steps needed to establish your own tourism enterprise.

Published in 2005, 159 pages
\$25.00

Small Farm Center Online Resources



Home Page

www.sfc.ucdavis.edu

Small Farm Center Agritourism Resources

www.sfc.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/links.html



Small Farm Center California Agritourism Database

www.calagtour.org

This online resource is a searchable database of agritourism operations throughout the state of California.

Other Online Resources

Cornell University's Small Farm Program

www.smallfarms.cornell.edu

www.smallfarms.cornell.edu/pages/resources/marketing/agritourism.cfm

www.nysgextension.org/tourism/tourism/agritou.htm

University of Wyoming Agritourism Resources

www.uwyo.edu

<http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/RanchRecr>

National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service

<http://attra.ncat.org>

<http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/entertainment.html>

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

www.nrcs.usda.gov

*[www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/RESS/
altenterprise/toolkit.html](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/RESS/altenterprise/toolkit.html)*

**U.S. Census Bureau
Demographic Data**

www.census.gov/main/www/access.html



UC Small Farm Center

One Shields Avenue • Davis CA 95616

530.75.8136

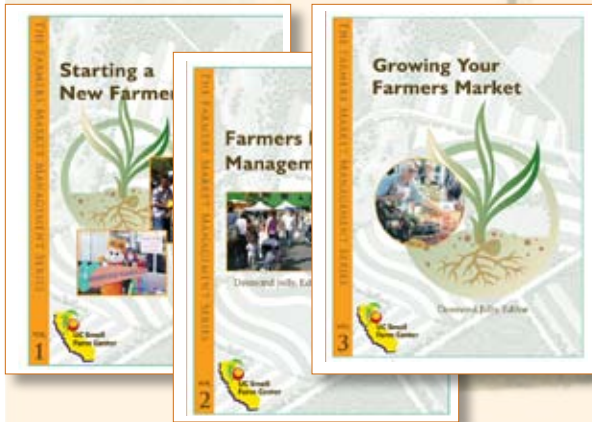
email sfcenter@ucdavis.edu

www.sfc.ucdavis.edu

Other SFC Publications

Farmers Market Management Series

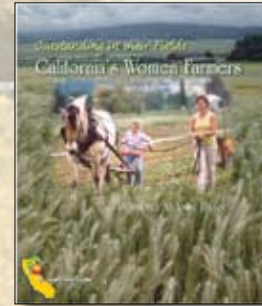
- Vol. 1: Starting a New Farmers Market
- Vol. 2: Farmers Market Management Skills
- Vol. 3: Growing Your Farmers Market



Women in Agriculture

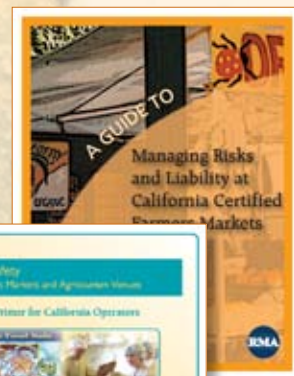
Outstanding in their Fields: California's Women Farmers

Profiles women farmers and ranchers who dramatize the pioneering spirit and creativity that animates artisanal agriculture.



Risk Management Series

Managing Risks and Liability at California Certified Farmers Markets

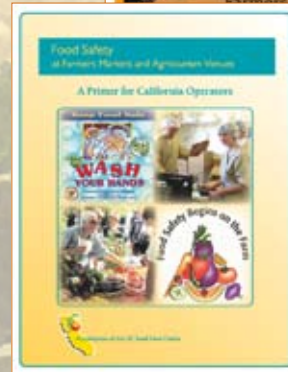


Research Reports

Outlook for a Small Farm Meat Goat Industry in California



Food Safety at Farmers Markets and Agritourism Venues



Outlook for California Artisanal Olive Oil Producers: Expert Assessments and Producer Case Studies



Occasional and Policy Papers

Beyond Food: Towards a Multifunctional Agriculture





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A Handbook for Planning and Managing Agritourism and Nature Tourism Operations

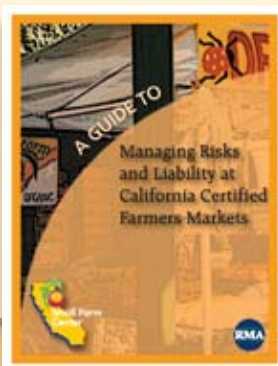
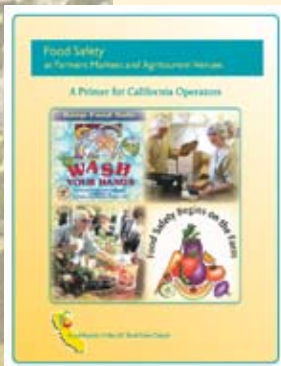


This primer on planning and managing agritourism and nature tourism operations is intended to support people who are considering adding an agritourism/nature tourism enterprise to their ongoing operations or planning to establish an enterprise de novo.

The manual covers most of the important considerations for ensuring that resources are adequate to support the operation—that adequate care has been taken to address issues of marketing, human resources, legal compliance, risk management, and the like.

Other relevant Small Farm Center publications in this genre include:

- Managing Risks and Liability at California Certified Farmers Markets
- Food Safety at Farmers Markets and Agritourism Venues



The University of California Small Farm Program is proud to provide these decision and management tools to our farmer and ranch operators.

Desmond Jolly
January 31, 2006

